



Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

KRIS NELSON COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROGRAM

...a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)

Who Benefits from Housing Advocacy: An Analysis of Legislative Outcomes

Prepared in partnership with
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

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Regional Affairs (CURA)

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Driven to DiscoverSM

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Final MCH Report: Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota
Michelle SanCartier

Background: Homelessness, Housing, and Quality of Life

Affordable and supportive housing (housing targeted for the most vulnerable and in need) has been related in the literature to a variety of positive outcomes –including protection from weather, diseases, infections, injuries, and violence (Corporation for Supportive Housing, 2014). The Healthy People 2020 Initiative names housing as a physical determinant of health (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2016). A physical determinant of health is something in a person’s physical environment that affects their health (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2016).

Research has pointed to the disproportionate number of people of color who make up the homeless population (United States Conference of Mayors, 2006; Wilder Research, 2016). A report by the United States Conference of Mayors estimated that 42% of the homeless population in a collection of major US cities are African American, 39% are white, 13% are Hispanic, 4% are American Indian, and 2% are Asian (2006). This is a stark contrast with the actual ethnic breakdown of the US population. When compared with the demographic breakdown of the homeless population, the US Census Bureau reported that as of 2015 the US population was 77.1% White, 13.3% Black or African American, 1.2% American Indian, and 5.6% were Asian (United States Census Bureau, 2015).

In Minnesota, African Americans accounted for 39% of homeless adults while they only made up 5% of total adults in the state population (Wilder Research, 2016). American Indians accounted for 8% of the homeless population and only made up 1% of the population in Minnesota (Wilder Research, 2016). These statistics point to the need for more housing efforts targeted toward people of color in Minnesota. Particularly for African American and American Indian populations who may be most at risk.

Homelessness has been found to be related to poor outcomes in both physical and mental health (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006, 2009; The Commonwealth Fund, 2014). One study found that homelessness for greater than 6 months after birth led to a 250% increased risk of poor health in children and a 118% increased risk of developmental disabilities (Sandel, Sheward, & Sturtevant, 2015). Adults who live in poor quality, unaffordable housing have also been found more likely than those in the general population to report themselves to be in “poor health” (Pollack & Lynch, 2009).

Rates of severe mental illness in the United States homeless population has been estimated to be as high as 30% (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2016). In Minnesota, 60% of those who were homeless in 2015 reported having a “significant mental illness” (Wilder Research, 2016). Rate of chronic conditions, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, stroke, cancer, hypertension, and substance abuse disorders have also been found to be more likely to occur in the homeless population (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006). In addition to the aforementioned health concerns, people who are homeless are at risk for environmental health hazards such as frostbite, leg ulcers, and upper respiratory infections (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006). They are also at risk for environmental mental health hazards such as trauma from “muggings, beatings, and rape” (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).

MCH: Serving Those Most in Need?

The purpose of this evaluation effort was to evaluate and validate the effect of MCH’s advocacy work to make sure advocacy dollars are serving people of color. This evaluation effort was the result of a conversation between the executive director of MCH and community leaders in homelessness. MCH leaders decided that it was vital to the integrity of their organization that

they actually follow the money they advocate for to make sure it's serving those most in need.

This evaluation was performed as a collaboration between MCH and the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). A graduate researcher with a background in public health and social work was contracted through CURA to conduct this evaluation.

Potential for Gaps in Services

The program evaluation efforts initiated by MCH were conducted because of potential for gaps in services. MCH was not sure if their advocacy dollars intended to serve the most in need, were primarily serving this population. To find out if they were serving who they intended to, the primary research question was: How many people of color –particularly those who identify as African American or American Indian/Native American –are living in the properties and developments that have been created or renovated using MCH funding? MCH was also interested in the ethnic breakdown of employees at companies and organizations that worked on properties and developments with money that MCH advocated for. This informed the secondary research question: How many people of color are working at companies and organizations that worked on properties and developments with money that MCH advocated for. The current evaluation examined housing award records from 2012 to 2015 to answer these questions. The results of this evaluation, will help to inform the future direction MCH may take to make sure their advocacy funding is reaching people of color.

Methods

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless advocates for money intended to reach service providers and housing properties for people who are homeless. Two entities, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the Department of Human services distribute this funding. The primary

research question MCH sought to address was the racial and ethnic breakdown of residents living at properties funded with MCH advocacy dollars from 2012 through 2015. The secondary research question MCH sought to address was the racial and ethnic breakdown of employees working on funded housing projects with MCH advocacy dollars from 2012-2015. Additional demographic questions were asked in two surveys to gain a full picture of resident and employee characteristics.

A spreadsheet to collect data regarding advocacy dollars from Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) information was created in Microsoft Excel. The spreadsheet was organized into MHFA contact information, and DHS contact information. MHFA information was also sorted into “Management Companies”, “Architects”, “Contractors”, “Service Providers”, and “Resident Demographics”.

Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA)

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency was contacted in September to obtain awarded property contact records from 2012 through 2015. Due to staffing changes and other internal data retrieval processes, this data was not obtained until December 2nd, 2016. Once these records were obtained, properties and housing projects that were funded with MCH advocacy dollars were entered into a contact database. MCH advocacy funding by year included:

2012-

Housing Infrastructure Bonds HTF, Hsg Infrastructure Bonds EDHC,

2013-

single family: EDHC, EDHC Indian Set-Aside, Housing and Jobs Growth Initiative

multifamily: PARIF, EDHC, EDHC WorkForce MF, EDHC Indian Set-Aside

2014-

single family: EDHC, EDHC Indian Set-Aside, Housing and Jobs Growth Initiative, Infrastructure Bond Funds

multifamily:(everything under Minnesota Housing Deferred), Hsg Infrastructure Bonds EDHC, Housing Infrastructure Bonds HTC, PARIF, HOME HARP, EDHC Workforce MF, EDHC MF, EDHC Indian Housing MF

2015-

single family: EDHC, Infrastructure Bond Funds, Interim Construction

multifamily: FFCC, Hsg Infrastructure Bonds EDHC, Hsg Infracstructre Bonds HTF, PARIF, EDHC Workforce MF, EDHC Workforce MF, EDHC MF, EDHC Indian Housing MF

After screening all awarded properties for only those funded from the MCH advocacy dollar sources listed above, there were 156 organizations and 65 properties funded through MHFA who were called and emailed to complete surveys and. During data collection, it was discovered that 12 properties were not built yet. MCH was particularly interested if these companies were woman or minority-owned or managed. Each organization and property were each called and emailed four times during follow-up periods to obtain survey completion. A total of 912 emails were sent and 637 calls were made over the four-month data collection period from December 2016-March 2017.

Two surveys were created in Qualtrics and Microsoft Word to collect data from each organization and property (See Appendix A). Surveys were based off demographic data collected for the MN Statewide Homeless Study in 2015 (Wilder Research, 2015) and were either completed through Qualtrics online survey software, or were completed via email. Phone scripts

were created collaboratively with MCH's executive director (Appendix B) and canned email responses were created for initial data collection and follow-up (Appendix C).

Department of Human Services (DHS)

Two meetings were held to discuss funding source and resident demographics. At the first meeting, it was determined that data in aggregate, rather than for each individual property, would be the only route to gather resident demographic data. Additionally, the only data available was from one region of Minnesota. After one additional meeting and several email correspondences, it was determined that race and ethnicity data was not readily available to be used in the current MCH evaluation. Additional meetings between MCH and the Department of Human Services may determine if this data collection will be possible in the future.

Results

Results of final data collection for MHFA were separated into "Resident Demographics" – an aggregate collection of racial and ethnic background of residents at each property who responded to the survey, and "Employee Demographics"- an aggregate collection of racial and ethnic background of employees who worked at each company who responded to the survey. The survey response rate for properties reporting resident demographics was 54.72% (29/53 properties responded, 12 not yet built). Response rate for companies reporting employee demographics was 36.54% (57/156), which includes those companies connected with properties that may still be in the construction phase and do not yet have residents.

Resident demographics by Property

Demographic data on a total of 4,566 residents was reported from 29 properties/projects funded in part from MCH advocacy dollars. By ownership/management type, 11 properties said they were owned or managed by a woman, 4 said they were owned or managed by a person of

color, and 5 said they were a non-profit without a single point of ownership or management.

There were 3 properties who were owned or managed by someone who was both a woman and person of color. The rest of the properties did not answer this question. Most residents were African, followed by American Indian, White or Caucasian, African American, Not Specified, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano, and Other/Mixed Race. The majority of residents were female and 30-39 years old. A complete breakdown of resident demographics is reported in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

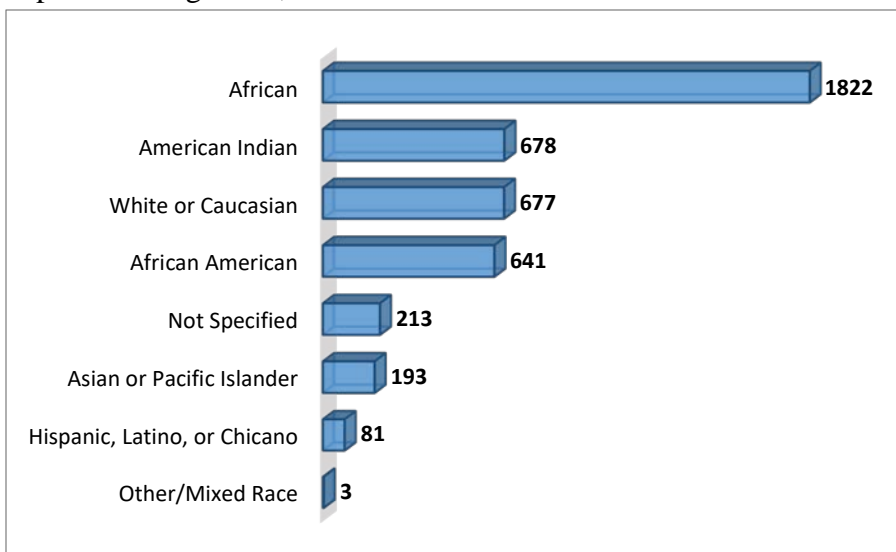


Figure 1. Resident Race

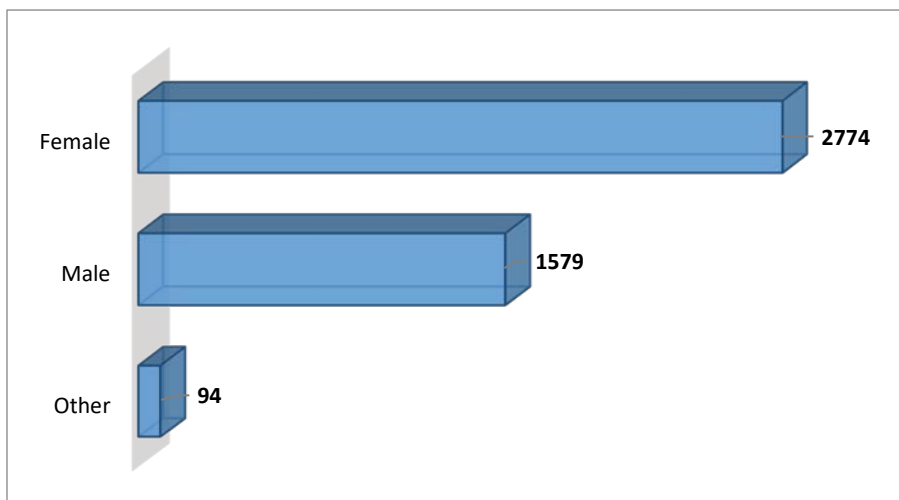


Figure 2. Resident Gender

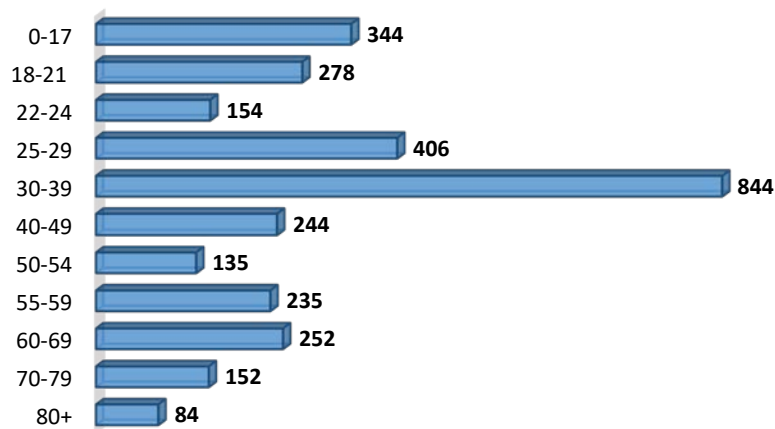


Figure 3. Resident Age

Employee Demographics by Company

Demographic data on a total of 4,064 employees was reported from 57 companies that worked on properties/projects funded in part from MCH advocacy dollars. By ownership/management type, 11 companies said they were owned or managed by a woman, 1 said they were owned or managed by a person of color, 9 said they were a non-profit without a single point of ownership or management. The rest of the companies did not answer this question. There was 1 company who was owned or managed by someone who was both a woman and person of color. Most employees were White or Caucasian, followed by African American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Latino, or Chicano, American Indian, Other/Mixed Race, Not Specified, and African. The majority of employees were female and the majority of companies were female-owned. A complete breakdown of resident demographics is reported in Figures 4 and 5.

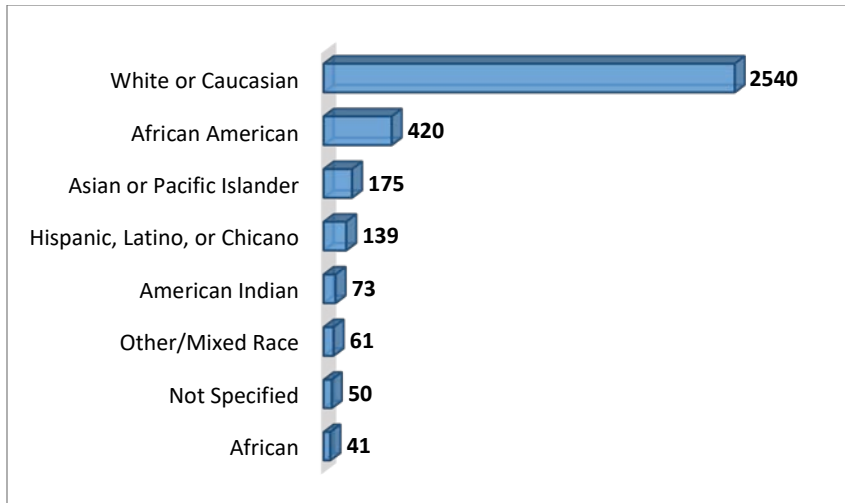


Figure 4. Employee Race

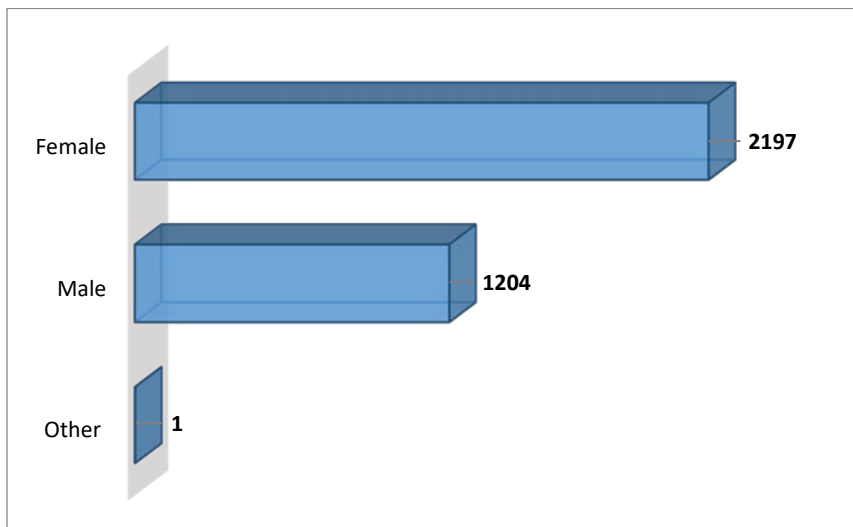


Figure 5. Employee Gender

Discussion

The results of this evaluation point to the fact that out of the properties who responded to the survey, residents were overwhelmingly reported as African, American Indian, White or Caucasian, and African American. These results may provide support for the mission of MCH's advocacy efforts. This is supported by the data in that nearly 40% of residents were reported as

African followed by American Indian at 14.85%. However, it should be noted that White or Caucasian residents made up 14.83% of residents who responded. Interestingly, but unsurprisingly, well over half of employees across the 57 companies who responded to the survey were White or Caucasian. This may pose an interesting question for future study in that those who are working on these housing projects do not always come from the same cultural background or may not have the same cultural understanding as those they are trying to serve. Perhaps this raises an additional question about if the cultural needs of the people of color these projects are intended to serve, are being met by their housing property and the staff who work at them.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this evaluation effort, most of which could not be foreseen in the planning and collection phase. The first limitation was the length in turnaround time of request for contact information from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency needed to contact properties and companies. Without this information, data collection could not begin. However, there were staffing changes and limitations to the receipt of this contact information that could not be hastened and were out of the control of researchers and staff at MHFA. This contact information was requested in September, 2016 and received on December 2nd which slowed the data collection process. However, this allowed time for refinement of study materials.

A similar limitation occurred with gathering contact information from the Department of Human services (DHS). It was determined after two meetings that demographic data including race and ethnicity of residents could not be easily extracted from records. However, it was discovered that a method collection of this information in a more standardized way is in progress. Unfortunately for the purposes of the current evaluation, this data was not yet

collected. Another limitation with this data collection was the researcher's lack of expertise with Department of Human Services policy and data collection efforts around homelessness funding distribution. Future collaboration between MCH and DHS could connect individuals of similar expertise and reconnect regarding data collection on race and ethnicity.

Additional limitations include the sensitivity and complexity of the race and ethnicity data collection process for this evaluation. During data collection, it was discovered that some properties and companies contacted did not wish to answer questions about race and ethnicity of residents and employees. This occurred even after a disclaimer about de-identification of data and confidentiality was presented and ensured. Additional roadblocks to this data collection included companies and properties who were unsure about how to look retrospectively for employee or resident data in 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015, as well as company representatives who first had to request clearance and records from their human resources department before filling out the survey about employees. For future data collection efforts, one recommendation would be for MCH to mail out a letter to properties and companies prior to data collection and before each subsequent follow up period that outlines why the data is being collected. This letter should include research questions, and a clear plan for how the data will be used.

A final limitation to this evaluation is the potential for self-selection bias. This is because not all companies or properties responded to the survey. The type of company or property that responded to this data might have been inherently different than those who did not respond. This is important because even though most residents from properties were reported as being people of color, those properties that did not have as many people of color living there may have been less likely to fill out this survey. Potential for this bias allows us to be less sure that MCH advocacy dollars are serving people of color the most out of all the properties MCH advocacy

dollars has served. However, we can state that “out of those who responded, the data suggest that MCH advocacy dollars are reaching people of color the most”. The same thing could be said about company results. Perhaps those with all male employees were less likely to respond which is why the overwhelming majority of respondents reported mostly female employees. Results of this evaluation interpreted with caution. The recommendation for this evaluation effort is that MCH should continue to follow-up with properties and companies to truly determine the reach of their advocacy dollars.

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Appendix A

Surveys (Word Doc Format)

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless Demographics Survey:
Properties/Developments

1. Please provide the name of your property/development in in the text box below.

2. Please enter your property/development's total number of
RESIDENTS:

3. Please enter the number of **RESIDENTS** at your property/development that best fit each of the following categories. Total must be equal to total number of residents for question 2.

African American

American Indian

African

Asian or Pacific

Islander

Hispanic, Latino,
or Chicano

White or
Caucasian

Other/Mixed Race (please specify race(s) and number in the box below:

Total

4. Please enter the number of **RESIDENTS** at your property development that best fit each of the following categories:

Male

Female

Other

5. Is your property/development woman or minority-managed?

☐ Yes, woman-managed

☐ Yes, minority-managed

☐ Yes, woman and minority-managed

☐ No, not woman or minority-managed

☐ Other (please provide comments below)

6. Please enter the number of **RESIDENTS** at your property/development that best fit each of the following age categories. If you do not know, enter the best you can.
Total must be equal to total number of residents for question 2.

0-17

18-21

22-24

25-29

30-39

40-49

50-54

55-59

60-69

70-79

80 +

Total:

7. Please provide the name of your **COMPANY** or **ORGANIZATION** in the text box below.

8. Please enter your **COMPANY's** total number of **EMPLOYEES**:

9. Please enter the number of **EMPLOYEES** at your **COMPANY** best fit each of the following categories:

African American

American Indian

African

Asian or Pacific

Islander

Hispanic, Latino,
or Chicano

White or
Caucasian

Other/Mixed Race(please specify race(s) and number in the box below:

Total

10. Please enter the number of **EMPLOYEES** at your **COMPANY** that best fit each of the following categories:

Male	<input type="text"/>
Female	<input type="text"/>
Other	<input type="text"/>

11. Is your company/organization woman or minority owned or managed?

- ☐ Yes, woman owned or managed
- ☐ Yes, minority owned or managed
- ☐ Yes, woman and minority owned or managed
- ☐ No, not woman or minority owned or managed
- ☐ Other (please provide comments below)

12. Is there any initiative that your **COMPANY** has regarding diversity or minorities for employees and/or residents? Please comment below.



Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless Demographics Survey:
Companies/Organizations

1. Please provide the name of your Company/Organization in the text box below.
*The name of your company is confidential and used for data collection purposes. It will be removed during analysis of overall results.

2. Please enter your company/organization's total number of employees in the box to the right:

3. Please enter the number of employees at your company/organization that best fit each of the following categories. Total must be equal to total number of employees for question 2.

African American

American Indian

African

Asian or Pacific
Islander

Hispanic, Latino,
or Chicano

White or
Caucasian

Other/Mixed Race (please specify race(s) and number in the box below:

Total

4. Please enter the number of employees at your company/organization that best fit each of the following categories:

Male

Female

Other

5. Is your company/organization woman or minority-managed?

☐ Yes, woman-managed

☐ Yes, minority-managed

☐ Yes, woman and minority-managed

☐ No, not woman or minority-managed

☐ Other (please provide comments below)

6. Is there any initiative that your company/organization has regarding diversity or minorities for employees and/or residents? Please comment below.

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Appendix B

Phone & Email Scripts

Phone Script for Properties & Developments

1. Hello. My name is Michelle and I am calling from the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.
2. ((Exchange pleasantries))
3. I'm a research assistant working on a project that requires me to gather demographic data about the people who have benefitted from our advocacy. Do you have a moment to help me with this?

IF YES:

1. Thank you for your help. As you may know, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is an advocacy organization that generates policies, community support and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. ((Name of development)) was built with funding we advocated for at the capitol. As part of my research, I am calling all service providers like yours to learn more about the demographics of the individuals and families who have moved into housing units built with dollars we advocated for. I know it may take you several minutes to find the data I am looking for, so would it be ok if I emailed my questions to you?
2. ((Get their email address))
3. Thank you so much for your time. If you have questions or would like more information, I am happy to connect you with our Executive Director, or you can learn more about our work at www.mnhomelesscoalition.org

IF NO:

1. Is there someone else I can speak with?
2. Can you provide me with their name and number?
3. Would there be a good time for me to call back?

Email Script:

“Hi NAME,

Thank you for speaking with me on DAY. I'm writing to follow up on our conversation and ask that you provide me with the following demographic information for residents living at NAME OF DEVELOPMENT:

Thank you so much for your time. If you have more questions, feel free to send me an email or give me a call at 651-491-4636.

Kind Regards,

Michelle SanCartier
Graduate Research Assistant
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Michelle@mnhomelesscoalition.org
Ph: 651.491.4636

Phone Script for companies/organizations:

4. Hello. My name is Michelle and I am calling from the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless.
5. ((Exchange pleasantries))
6. "I'm a research assistant working on a project that requires me to gather demographic data about your **company/organization**. Do you have a moment to help me with this?"

IF YES:

4. Thank you for your help. As you may know, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is an advocacy organization that generates policies, community support and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. **((Name of company/org))** has received funding we advocated for at the capitol. As part of my research, I am calling all **companies/orgs** like yours to learn more about the demographics of the companies who have benefitted from our advocacy. So I just have a few questions for you:
 - a. Would you please confirm the owner's name and name of the business?
 - b. Is that a woman owned and/or minority owned business?
 - c. Is there any initiative your business has in regard to diversity or minorities?
5. Thank you so much for your time. If you have questions or would like more information, I am happy to connect you with our Executive Director, or you can learn more about our work at www.mnhomelesscoalition.org

IF NO:

4. Is there someone else I can speak with?
5. Can you provide me with their name and number?
6. Would there be a good time for me to call back?

Email Script:

“Hi There,

My name is Michelle and I’m a research assistant at Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. As you may know, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is an advocacy organization that generates policies, community support and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. ((Name of company/org)) has received funding we advocated for at the capitol. As part of my research, I am reaching out to all companies//orgs like yours to learn more about the demographics of the companies who have benefitted from our advocacy. I am hoping you can answer the following questions for me:

1. Would you please confirm the owner’s name and name of the business?
2. Is that a woman owned and/or minority owned business?
3. Is there any initiative your business has in regard to diversity or minorities?

Thank you so much for your time. If you have more questions, feel free to send me an email or give me a call at 651-491-4636.

Kind Regards,

Michelle SanCartier
Graduate Research Assistant
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Michelle@mnhomelesscoalition.org
Ph: 651.491.4636

Appendix C

Canned Email Responses

Canned Response for Properties

Hi There,

My name is Michelle and I'm a graduate researcher for Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. We are currently conducting a research project that requires me to gather information from your organization.

As you may know, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is an advocacy organization that generates policies, community support and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. In YEAR, YOUR COMPANY directly or indirectly benefited from funding we advocated for at the capitol for work on PROPERTY. As part of my research, I am reaching out to all organizations like yours who have benefited from our advocacy to learn more about the demographics of the residents living there.

You can complete our very short 10 question demographics survey by clicking [HERE](#).

If you would prefer a word document copy, please email me.

Thank you so much for your time. If you have more questions, feel free to send me an email or give me a call at [612-430-8572](tel:612-430-8572).

Kind Regards,

Michelle SanCartier
Graduate Research Assistant
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Michelle@mnhomelesscoalition.org | [612-430-8572](tel:612-430-8572)

Canned Response for Companies

Hi There,

My name is Michelle and I'm a graduate researcher for Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. We are currently conducting a research project that requires me to gather information from your company.

As you may know, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is an advocacy organization that generates policies, community support and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. In YEAR, PROPERTY, a property that COMPANY performed work for, received funding we advocated for at the capitol. As part of my research, I am reaching out to all COMPANY TYPE like yours to learn more about the demographics of the companies who have benefited from our advocacy.

You can complete our very short 7 question demographics survey by clicking [HERE](#).

If you would prefer a copy in a word document, please email me.

Thank you so much for your time. If you have more questions, feel free to send me an email or give me a call at [612-430-8572](tel:612-430-8572).

Kind Regards,

Michelle SanCartier
Graduate Research Assistant
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Michelle@mnhomelesscoalition.org | [612-430-8572](tel:612-430-8572)